



Home » Office of Public Affairs

JUSTICE NEWS

Department of Justice

Office of Public Affairs



DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

OPEN GOVERNMENT AT THE DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, June 21, 2012

Justice Department Files Lawsuit Against the Twin Cities of Colorado City, Arizona, and Hildale, Utah, and Local Utility Companies Alleging Religious Discrimination



WASHINGTON - The Justice Department filed a lawsuit today against the town of Colorado City, Ariz.; the city of Hildale, Utah; Twin City Water Authority; and Twin City Power alleging a pattern or practice of police misconduct and violations of federal civil rights laws. The complaint alleges discrimination based on religion in violation of the Fair Housing Act, the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act and Title III of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This is the first lawsuit by the Justice Department to include claims under both the Fair Housing Act and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act.

The adjoining towns of Colorado City and Hildale are located on the border of Arizona and Utah and are populated primarily by members of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS). The FLDS is not affiliated with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Arizona, alleges that defendants discriminated against individuals who are not members of the FLDS by engaging in a pattern or practice of violating the First, Fourth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution and the Fair Housing Act. The complaint contends that the cities, their joint police department and local utility providers under the cities' control have allowed the FLDS Church to improperly influence the provision of policing services, utility services and access to housing and public facilities, and that this improper influence has led to discriminatory treatment against non-FLDS residents.

Specifically, the complaint alleges that the Colorado City Marshal's Office (CCMO), the cities' joint police department, routinely uses its enforcement authority to enforce the edicts and will of the FLDS; fails to protect non-FLDS individuals from victimization by FLDS individuals; refuses to cooperate with other law enforcement agencies' investigations of FLDS individuals; selectively enforces laws against non-FLDS; and uses its authority to facilitate unlawful evictions of non-FLDS, among other unlawful conduct. The complaint also alleges that Colorado City, Hildale, Twin City Water Authority and Twin City Power have denied or unreasonably delayed providing

DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE ACTION CENTER

- Report a Crime
- Get a Job
- Locate a Prison, Inmate, or Sex Offender
- Apply for a Grant
- Submit a Complaint
- Report Waste, Fraud, Abuse or Misconduct to the Inspector General
- Find Sales of Seized Property
- Find Help and Information for Crime Victims
- Register, Apply for Permits, or Request Records

water and electric service to non-FLDS residents, and that the municipalities refuse to issue building permits and prevent individuals from constructing or occupying existing housing because of the individuals' religious affiliation.

"Religious freedom is a cherished principle of our democracy. City governments and their police departments may not favor one religious group over another and may not discriminate against individuals because of their religious affiliation," said Thomas E. Perez, Assistant Attorney General for the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "No individual in the United States should be targeted for discriminatory treatment by a city, its officials or the police because of his or her religion."

Both Utah and Arizona have decertified CCMO officers. Three of the officers were decertified because they refused to cooperate with state law enforcement efforts. In addition, the sheriff's offices in both states have been actively addressing the issues in the communities. The United States' complaint seeks a court order prohibiting future discrimination by the defendants, monetary damages for those harmed by the defendants' actions and a civil penalty.

This matter was investigated by attorneys from the Housing and Civil Enforcement Section and the Special Litigation Section of the Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division. More information about the Civil Rights Division and the laws it enforces is available at www.usdoj.gov/crt. If you have any information regarding this matter, please contact the Justice Department at 1-800-896-7743 or email the department at coloradocitydiscrimination@usdoj.gov.

The complaint is an allegation of unlawful conduct. The allegations must still be proved in federal court.

12-787

Civil Rights Division

Updated September 15, 2014

Identify Our Most Wanted Fugitives

Find a Form

Report and Identify Missing Persons

Contact Us



U.S. DEPARTMENT of JUSTICE | 950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20530-0001

ABOUT

The Attorney General
Budget & Performance
Strategic Plans
History

AGENCIES

BUSINESS

Business Opportunities
Small & Disadvantaged
Business
Grants

RESOURCES

Forms
Publications
Case Highlights
Legislative Histories
Information for Victims in
Large Cases

NEWS

The Justice Blog
Public Schedule
Videos
Photo Gallery

CAREERS

Legal Careers
Interns, Recent Graduates,
and Fellows
Veteran Recruitment

CONTACT

JUSTICE.GOV

Archive	Social Media
Accessibility	For Employees
Adobe Reader	Office of the
FOIA	Inspector General
No FEAR Act	Government
Information Quality	Resources
Privacy Policy	Open Government
Legal Policies &	Plain Writing
Disclaimers	USA.gov
	BusinessUSA